

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

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1 Peter 3:21

By Glynn Purdy

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." You should at this time read 1 Peter 3: 18-22. This is from the King James Version. "Which also after a true likeness doth save you even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (Revised Version).

The antecedent of water in Verse 20, is not the water of the flood, but "water" in general. Noah was saved by "water" during the flood, and in some way (figure, likeness) man is saved by water today.

The way we are "saved by water" today is identified as "water baptism." Thus Peter shows that to be baptized in water is a "likeness" of how Noah was "saved by water". Now we ALL KNOW that GOD SAVED NOAH, but God gave Noah a PLAN, whereby he could SAVE HIMSELF, just as Peter told the Jews of Acts 2, AFTER giving them GOD'S PLAN for salvation (Acts 2:38) by saying "SAVE YOURSELVES FROM THIS UN-TOWARD GENERATION, Acts 2:40; No, man can NOT SAVE HIMSELF BY HIMSELF, BUT HE CAN SAVE HIMSELF BY DOING WHAT GOD TELLS HIM TO DO TO BE SAVED! This Noah did, Heb. 11:7. NOAH BELIEVED GOD! This belief (faith) in God's word "MOVED" Noah to BUILD THE ARK TO SAVE HIMSELF. God SAVED him, but through a PLAN which INCLUDED WATER, which WATER RAISED THE ARK TO SAFE GROUND! THE SAME WATER DESTROYED ALL THOSE OUTSIDE THE ARK.

In other words the WATER of the flood SEPARATED the SAVED from the LOST! THE SAME IS TRUE TODAY! ONLY EIGHT PEOPLE BELIEVED GOD DURING THE FLOOD AND THUS WERE SAVED! ALL OTHERS WERE LOST BECAUSE THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT GOD WOULD ALLOW THEM TO BE LOST JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT IN THE ARK! NOAH WAS PREACHING ARK SALVATION, NO BUT THE ARK WAS THE PLACE OF SALVATION AND THE PLACE PROVED AS IMPORTANT AS THE SAVIOUR!

It has PLEASSED God today to place salvation IN Christ, Eph. 1:3. To ADD the BAPTIZED believers to THE CHURCH, Acts 2:38-47. ONLY THE BAPTIZED WERE ADDED TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST, Col. 1: 18.

We notice that Naaman was healed AFTER he had dipped seven times in the Jordan River, 2 Kings 5, so here too, God HEALED but the JORDAN was the PLACE and WATER was the element. Naaman could NOT have been healed ANY other place, or by dipping in any other liquid! This we know! Then why is it so strange, that today God has chosen the Lord's church as the PLACE of salvation and WATER as the element? YES INDEED, WHY IS THIS SO UNREASONABLE TO SO MANY PEOPLE? THE WORLD DID NOT ACCEPT GOD'S WAY IN THE DAYS OF NOAH, YET GOD DID NOT CHANGE HIS PLAN OF SALVATION! WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THAT HE WILL CHANGE IT TODAY BECAUSE MANY REJECT..... HIS PLAN?

We notice that baptism is a spiritual plan for a spiritual healing, and is NOT for putting away "the filth of the flesh", or to CLEAN the body of a person. This baptism is not just a BATH! This baptism is the answer." or "interrogation"

of a good conscience.....Paul had a GOOD conscience toward God (Acts 23: 1), but he did not KNOW, nor had he OBEYED God's plan, so he was ignorant of God's will. When he was told to arise and be BAPTIZED AND "WASH AWAY HIS SINS" (Acts 22:16), this he had to NOW do to CLEAR an enlightened conscience! You, too, when you LEARN that baptism is for the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), will have to arise and be baptized and WASH AWAY YOUR SINS (IN THE FIGURE THAT NAAMAN WASHED AWAY HIS LEPROSY) IN ORDER TO HAVE A CLEAR CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD! WHY DON'T YOU DO THAT?

He Careth For You

Worry is detrimental to our minds and health. In an age that is full of rapid change, and in which people are so occupied with material things and material goals, the average person is highly susceptible to worry and its dangerous consequences.

Worry is a gateway to mental and emotional disease. It is estimated that one out of every twenty persons now alive in this country will spend some part of his life in an institution for the mentally ill.

There are a number of reasons why people worry. One of these, and probably one of the most common, is that of being anxious about things over which they have no control.

The Christian has the solution to this kind of worry problem, His life as a Christian includes complete dependence on God and submission to His will.

It is very difficult for the material-minded person to think of a power greater than material possessions and

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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DOES EVERY MAN HAVE A RIGHT TO WORSHIP GOD ACCORDING TO 'THE DICTATES OF HIS OWN HEART'?

WHAT ABOUT THE DAYS OF ADAM AND HIS SONS?

We learn that Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God. According to the dictates of their own heart? YES AND NO! Cain offered his according to the dictates of his own heart, but God REJECTED his sacrifice! "By Faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh", Heb. 11:4. Abel offered his gift by FAITH. Did Cain have the right to follow the dictates of his own heart? NOT IF HE WANTED GOD TO ACCEPT HIS OFFERING, OR WANTED GOD TO BLESS HIM! God accepted Abel's offering because it was offered by FAITH but rejected Cain's offering because Cain offered the kind of offering he THOUGHT God would accept.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT "BY FAITH" ABEL OFFERED HIS OFFERING?

"So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God", Rom. 10:17. Without FAITH no one can PLEASE God, Heb. 11:6. From this we learn that we MUST worship and serve God BY FAITH and faith ONLY comes from HEARING GOD' Where God has not instructed, or spoken (he speaks to us today through his Son, Heb. 1:1-2, and God teaches us to hear his Son, Matt. 17:5) there is NO faith. Then where there is No faith we CANNOT please God. The things God commands through his son are recorded in the Bible by the Holy Spirit whom

Christ sent for that PURPOSE, John 14:26 and John 16:13. Then where the Bible commands and we obey, this, and this only, is by faith. We WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT, II Cor. 5:7. We MUST walk ONLY by faith to please God. We cannot please Him or obey Him, by WALKING by sight, by WALKING according to the dictates of our own heart, nor any OTHER way. When God commands ONE way (Jesus says he is the WAY, John 14: 6) this excludes EVERY OTHER way.

WHAT ABOUT THE DAYS OF NOAH

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith, Heb. 11:7. Faith WITHOUT works is DEAD, James 2:24-26, so this faith had to MOVE Noah to BUILD an ark. It was the ARK that saved him, but God told him to BUILD THE ARK, so it was by faith (working faith) that he was saved. Faith ONLY comes from hearing God and we cannot please God without faith, so when God told Noah to build the ark and he MOVED (walked) by these instructions (Commands) he PLEASED God and was saved because he DID what God told him to do to be saved.

You Can't Legislate Morals

"Man, you're not even on the scene! Don't you know you can't legislate morals?!"— a familiar refrain. It's heard everyday now. The implication is it's not possible to control the minds of people nor their actions, so why bother to pass laws about morality! The only law is to be "the law of self-discipline." John Dewey's educational theories notwithstanding, it is not within man to be completely, morally self-directive (Jeremiah 10:23).

Casual observation shows the direction our society has moved when laws of moral restraint are struck down by the courts. In a recent "Issues and Answers" program, Billy Graham correctly pointed out to interviewing reporters the unprece-

dent, sudden deluge in the last year of pornography, public nudity, and public immorality—brought about by laxity of our laws in this area. He also referred, in contrast, to communist nations maintenance of high moral standards of public decency (based on their knowledge of history that no nation has remained strong which denies the importance of marriage and the moral restraints connected with it).

The shift from morality has been so dramatic that in less than the span of the last twelve months the "bad guys" have now become those who speak out for restraint! Recently near Dallas at a hippie-populated music festival, hundreds of nude swimmers received favorable press copy. Citizens who protested to police and the boaters who "looked" were denounced by police and the news media.

Is there no validity in restraint? Is there justification for societies' right to set limits on individual behavior for the good of all? Is it right to conclude the only restraint is to be self-censorship? While self-censorship is the most effective, laws controlling morality are to be the concern of decent citizens. In the old covenant God had laws of morality that He expected society to enforce (Exodus 20)—and such censorship was a Divine idea! It didn't come from Moses. Doing what was right "in their own eyes" led morally downward (Judges 17:6) rather than to a "more realistic, free society."

The New Testament likewise urges God's people to approve, support, and assist government in legislating against evil, for our government is—"the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4).

Christians are to take an active public stand for right (Phil. 1:17; Acts 24:25). This negates indifference to pornography, obscenity, and public displays of immoral living. Parents are not to passively "let everyone do their own thing" when they see their children exposed to people who publicly advocate and display immoral living (Eph. 6:4; I Thess. 5:22).

Under the guise of freedom of the individual it is argued that pornography is "an abstract term that cannot be defined, "because what is pornographic to one person may not be pornographic to another. This reasoning denies a community's ability to arrive at a norm for standards of morality which citizens of that society are expected to live by! Some

people may drive safely at 100m.p.h. Some can eat rotten food without getting poisoned. Some can drink large quantities of liquor and still drive with marginal ability...yet, the community outlaws these activities for the common good. Pornographically degrading the human being and the sacredness of the soul whether in magazines, movies, or in the morays of everyday life is as harmful to a society as drunk driving, speeding, or serving poisoned food. Morals may not be legislated in the heart. Morals can, however, be upheld through community control!

—Bob Barnhill

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

Alton Newsletter 1 John 3 : 1 - 3

The Christian religion is the religion of hope. There are many references to the Christian hope in the New Testament. The word hope is defined as "desire with the expectation of obtaining what is desired". It is commonly used simply as a desire for something. This is incorrect, since for one to actually have hope in obtaining something he must also have the expectation of obtaining it. Furthermore, there must be an underlying cause or commitment to give expectation of obtaining that which is desired. For this reason desire alone is not hope. For instance: a gift of a \$1000.00, or good-will of everyone or a reunion in this life of all friends and loved ones, might be the desire but certainly these are not expected, therefore, we cannot hope for them. But by the same token, expectation alone is not hope. Since things like sickness, taxes, and the like are to be expected but I would say undesired, therefore we do not hope for them. But where there is a desire and an expectation with cause for expectation, there is hope. And the Christian hope that is within us is necessary to a successful Christian life.

The Christian hope is not 'that we are Christians'. Sometimes when asked "Are you a Christian?" the reply might be, "I hope so." Perhaps what is meant, no doubt, is that we desire to be a better Christian and expect to do better. But we can know whether or not we are Christians. Therefore, hope would be the wrong word. Rm. 8:16. It is not the hope that all will be ultimately saved. Though we may desire the salvation of all, we cannot expect it in view of - 2 Thess. 1:8f; Rev. 21:8. Therefore, we do not hope for it

as much as we would desire it. The Christian hope is perhaps best defined by John as he says, "it does not yet appear what we shall be" this suggests there are many things regarding the future that are not clear to us now. But these truths regarding hope are taught and thus a basis for expectation.

1—Appearing of the glory of Christ. Titus 2:13; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16.

2—Raised by the power of Christ. 1 Thess. 4:16; John 5:28,29.

3—United with the person of Christ. 1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 1:23.

4—Conformed to the image of Christ. 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21.

5—Eternity in the presence of Christ. 1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:3...

Heaven, with all its joy and bliss, its beautify and grandeur, is the hope of the Christian. We ought to desire it and we ought to expect it, because it is a stated fact and promise from God, and it is impossible for God to lie.

As children of God, we have reason 'or a base' for expectation. 1 Jno. 3:1f; Jno. 3:16; and 1 Jno. 4:10 - and this is not because of our worth. We are still unworthy. We become children of God via - New Birth - Jno. 3:3-5; and Gal. 3:26 f. And friends, no one except a child of God can have this hope of heaven. Be a realist, face the facts. The scripture is too clear to be misunderstood. Hope is in Christ. 1 Cor. 15:19, and only children of God are in Christ, Gal. 3:26-29....Those who are not children of God are 'with certainty' without God, and those without God are without hope. See Eph. 2:12 and remainder of chapter.

Hope purifies, or is the means of one, keeping himself pure." Christians must be pure. Matt. 5:8 - 1 Tim. 5:22; Rom. 12: 1 ff. The brighter our hope, the purer in heart and life, the brighter our hope of heaven. The desiring of heaven and expecting heaven makes for purity. Col. 3:1-4. Hope is the anchor of the soul. Heb. 6:19. There is the need of standing fast. When we are shaken by, troubles, sorrows, temptations, and reverses, it is hope as an anchor that saves us from being tossed about. Rom. 8:23-25. Hope gives confidence and assurance and thus courage. Rom. 5:3-5. It is cause for rejoicing. The Christian has every cause to rejoice and it is a rejoicing privilege.

The strength of hope depends upon: The strength of desire, how badly I want

to go to heaven, and — The strength of expectation. This in turn is dependent upon our faith in God who has promised, and upon our own conduct. I know of no other item which can be more precious than a Christian's hope. Nothing else in this world can compare. Let me ask you, *Do you really deep down in your heart have this hope?*

"ARE WE TO ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS?"

By Weldon Bennett, Associate Professor of Bible Abilene Christian College

A frequent criticism of contemporary preaching is that it is not relevant. Or, in other words, preachers do not have their ears open to the questions which modern man is asking.

Is this criticism valid? Yes, we believe that it is to a certain degree. No minister of the Word can close his eyes and ears to the life situation in which he finds himself and expect his message to penetrate the hearts of his hearers. Each generation raises questions that are relevant to the gospel, and these should be dealt with frankly and sincerely. Are there any absolute standards of morality; What is the church's obligation to the poor? Can a Christian isolate himself socially from certain racial groups? These are some of the burning issues facing Americans today. The Bible has much to say about them. The answers fall within the framework of preaching the gospel (see Galatians 2:11-14).

But, is preaching the gospel to be limited to answering the questions of modern man? We reply with a categorical NO! God's preachers have always taken the initiative in raising questions on which the populace had given little or no thought. Jonah entered Ninevah uninvited (he was sent, however). "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Johan 3:4). This prophet did not announce a meeting in the town hall and then ask his auditors to pose the questions. God told him beforehand what to preach.

Follow the steps of the New Testament evangelists. Was it in answer to a question of the Jews that Peter proclaimed his memorable Pentecost sermon? On the contrary, it took that message to provoke their questions, "What shall we do?"

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EDITORS : Clovis Ragsdale and James E. Henley

THE CARETH FOR YOU

Continued

means, or to remember that material means, even if they could be controlled and depended upon, are only temporary in nature. They can be lost or pass away much more easily than they can be gained.

It is difficult for an average human being to see how Job would remain steadfast in his faith in God when everything—family, possessions, and even his health—was, in a brief time, swept away completely. And Job originally had everything in abundance that people ordinarily of falling back upon in times of reverses and misfortune.

In cruel extremities, people grope about painfully seeking to control situations that are impossible for them to control. But, beyond what they are able to do about impossible situations, they, relying only on their limited selves, can only be tormented by agonizing and paralyzing worry.

Faithful Christians must remember, in extremity, these words: "Casting all your (anxious) care upon Him, for He careth for you." (1 Peter 4:7). Beyond what they can do, the rest will be taken care of by the Father, who cares for His children. Resignation to His will will bring the necessary peace to Christians who remember that God still controls the universe and is infinitely more powerful than any evil that can befall them.

A.O. Goldfinch

News

The South Curry street Church of Christ in West Plains reports a very successful series of study, on building up the

local church, with Brother Ira North as speaker. Over 450 attended each evening.

Brother Mid McNight will conduct a workshop on Organized Personal Work, November the 10th through the 13th, at the South Curry Street Church of Christ, West Plains, Missouri. Everyone is urged to attend this Work Shop.

WEST PLAINS REPORT SUCCESSFUL V.B.S.

This year we had the best attended VBS in eight or ten years. For the morning sessions we averaged 234 and for the evening sessions we averaged 308. The adult classes at night had a different speaker each night and it seemed to work out very well. The first night we had Bro. Cliff Stewart of Gospel Hill, Tuesday night was Bro. James Jarrett of the S. Curry St. church; Wednesday night was Bro. Neale Phipps of the S. Curry St. church; Thursday night was Bro. Fred Casey of Bakersfield; and Friday night was Bro. James Henley of Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Contributions

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WORDS OF WISDOM?????

"Did you know that if all the people who go to sleep in church were laid end

to end—they would be more comfortable?"

"The reason there were fewer wrecks in the horse and buggy days was because the driver didn't depend wholly on his own intelligence."

ARE WE TO ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS?

Continued

(Acts 2:37). Did Paul go to Athens because the Greeks were asking, "Shall we worship idols?" Did he reason of "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" by virtue of questions put by Governor Felix? (Acts 24:25.)

Christ has told us to go preach the gospel to every creature, to "preach the Word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort" (II Tim. 4:2). The gospel is designed to point out man's needs and then announce the remedy. We are to do all in our power to awaken the interest of a careless, thoughtless, unquestioning mass of humanity lost in sin. It is not until they hear the truth that many will begin asking the truly relevant question, "What must we do to be saved?"

IT IS A FACT

Take the leafy branch from a tree. Lay it carefully aside and watch! Slowly the color fades—the leaves go limp, curl up and it is dead!

Take a fish out of the lake—lay it carefully on the sand and watch! Frantically it twists, struggles, gradually weakens, moving its gills slower, then quivers and it is dead!

Take a church member, carefully allow him to be separated from God in worship, fellowship, prayer and active service. Gradually his conscience quivers as it misses the Lord's Table. He frets at himself for missing as questionable activities begin to occupy his time. Soon, there are many hypocrites in the church; the church is always asking for money; finally he takes a stand against Christian living and HE IS DEAD!!!

—The Dewey Builder

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